

REMARKS:

These amendments and remarks are filed in response to an office action dated August 3, 2006. Claims 1-36 are pending in the application. Claims 1-13 are objected to and 1-36 are rejected.

Claims 1-13 are objected to for having informalities in brackets before the claim numbers. The claims are amended to remove the bracketed informalities.

Claims 1-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention, specifically, “said distillation apparatus” is objected to as unclear because more than one distillation step is present in the process. Applicants traverse the rejection. The objected to element recites “said distillation apparatus.” The only antecedent basis for this “said distillation apparatus is in the element “distilling at least a portion of the first overhead.” Applicants respectfully assert that this rejection should be withdrawn.

Claim 2 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention, specifically, including the terms “improvement further comprises.” Claim 2 has been amended. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection has been overcome and should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-36 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over United States Patent Number 5,371,286 (*Blay*) in view of United States Patent Number 6,143,930 (*Singh*). Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection. Initially, as the Examiner indicates, *Blay* fails to teach the required steps of extracting the second overhead with water and separating therefrom an aqueous stream comprising said at least one PRC and recycling at least a first portion of the extracted second overhead to said distillation apparatus. Moreover, *Blay* is directed to processing the heavy phase 30 to extract residue with the intent to remove alkane impurities from the heavy phase. *Blay* is not directed to, and, indeed, is silent as to processing the light phase in the decanter and does not suggest recycling any component from the light phase. Thus, there is no suggestion in *Blay* to process the light phase, and there is no suggestion within *Blay* to combine *Blay* with any art directed to processing the light phase.

Singh does not teach or suggest the purported missing step of *Blay*, recycling at least a first portion of the extracted second overhead to said distillation apparatus. For these reasons alone, the Applicants respectfully assert the rejection is improper and should be withdrawn.

As an explanation of this position, a recycle stream in accordance with the pending claims is illustrated in Figure 2 as stream 68, representing a portion of raffinate 66. This recycle stream 68 is neither taught nor suggested in *Singh*. See Figure 1 (stream 66) and column 11, lines 38-42. The pending published application paragraphs 49 and 50 describe stream 68 and the advantages of using the stream, such as improving the aldehyde removal efficiency of the entire system and preventing DME from accumulating in the acetaldehyde removal system. These improvements and advantages are not taught or suggested by either *Blay* or *Singh* or their combination. This recycle step is found in each of the pending independent claims. Applicants respectfully assert that the rejection has been overcome and should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-36 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as unpatentable over claims 1-41 of United States Patent Application Number 10/708,420. Claims 1-36 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-14 of co-pending United States Patent Application Number 10/708,423. Claims 1-36 are provisionally rejected on the ground of nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over claims 1-20 of copending United States Patent Application Number 11/116,771, Applicants have enclosed provisional terminal disclaimers for each of these provisional rejections. Withdrawal of the provisional rejections is respectfully requested.

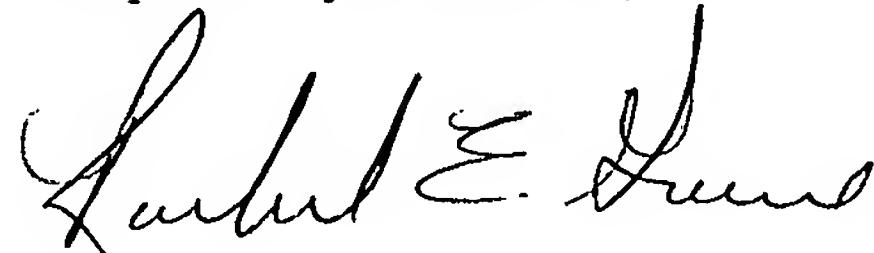
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Applicants believe that the present pending claims are in condition for allowance. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider the rejection of the pending claims in light of the above analysis.

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In order to facilitate the resolution of any questions presented by this paper, Applicants request that the Examiner directly contact the undersigned attorney by telephone at 713-787-1595 to further the discussion, reconsideration, and allowance of the claims.

Respectfully submitted,



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